

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ITFE-00 AID-05 SSO-00 INSE-00 INRE-00

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TO CINCPACREP GUAMG/PPTI IMMEDIATE
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CP PENDLETON IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC IMMEDIATE
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SECDEF IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 243388

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: REPATRIATE SHIP; PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE

FOR SENIOR CIVIL COORDINATOR FROM IATF

1. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE FOR THE
HANDLING OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE SHIP VIET-NAM THUONG TIN
ONE WITH 1600 VIETNAMESE REFUGEE REPATRIATES FROM GUAM.

2. OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO HAVE THE REFUGEES RECEIVED
BY THE AUTHORITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND NOT BE TURNED AWAY.
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IF THIS TRIP IS VIEWED AS AN OPERATION ORDERED AND DIRECTED

BY THE USG, IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT THE CHANCES OF THE SHIP BEING TURNED BACK ARE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED. THEREFORE, ALL OF OUR ACTIONS MUST REINFORCE THE CORRECT AND ACCURATE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE ACCEDING TO THE REFUGEES' DEMANDS TO BE ALLOWED TO RETURN ON A VIETNAMESE SHIP.

3. TO AVOID GIVING THE APPEARANCE THAT THE USG IS CONDUCTING THIS OPERATION, THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE FOR DEALING WITH THE PRESS IS PROVIDED:

(A) THE SENIOR CIVIL COORDINATOR ON GUAM IS THE ONLY ADDRESSEE AUTHORIZED POINT OF CONTACT FOR PRESS INQUIRIES. ALL OTHER ADDRESSEES WILL REFER PRESS INQUIRIES TO THE SCC GUAM OR THE IATF IN WASHINGTON.

(B) THERE WILL BE NO RPT NO PARTICIPATION BY ANY USG OFFICIAL IN ANY PRESS CONFERENCE, FORMAL BRIEFING OR CEREMONY REGARDING THE SHIP'S DEPARTURE.

(C) THERE WILL BE NO PRESS CONFERENCES, BRIEFINGS OR CEREMONIES RELATED TO THE SHIP'S DEPARTURE ORGANIZED BY ANY USG OFFICIAL.

(D) THERE WILL BE NO USG PARTICIPATION IN ANY PRESS CONFERENCES ORGANIZED BY THE REPATRIATES. THERE ARE TO BE NO RPT NO JOINT PRESS CONFERENCES WITH THE REPATRIATES.

4. NONE OF THIS GUIDANCE IS TO BE IN ANY WAY CONSTRUED TO MEAN THAT YOU SHOULD PREVENT MEDIA CONTACT WITH THE REPATRIATES. IF THE REPATRIATES WISH TO DISCUSS THEIR VOYAGE WITH THE MEDIA THEY SHOULD BE ALLOWED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO. EQUALLY, THE MEDIA SHOULD BE GIVEN APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO THE REPATRIATES.

5. ONE EXCEPTION TO THE ABOVE GUIDANCE IS OUR DESIRE THAT THE PRESS BE ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE SHIP PRIOR TO THE VOYAGE. YOU SHOULD ARRANGE THIS INSPECTION. IT WILL GIVE THE PRESS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THAT THE SHIP IS SEAWORTHY AND ALSO WILL ALLOW THEM TO SEE THE FINE WORK DONE BY THE US NAVY IN PREPARING IT FOR THE VOYAGE. THIS
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PRESS ACCESS SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED PRIOR TO THE REPATRIATES' ACTUAL BOARDING OF THE SHIP. CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT ANY PRESS STOWAYS.

6. THE ABOVE GUIDANCE SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT YOU ARE NOT TO ANSWER QUERIES FROM THE PRESS. WE HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE AND YOU SHOULD RESPOND TO ALL QUESTIONS WITHIN YOUR AREA OF COMPETENCE USING GUIDANCE PRE-

VIOUSLY PROVIDED AND THAT BELOW. WE REEMPHASIZE THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO STIFLE INFO. WE ONLY WISH TO AVOID GIVING THIS PROJECT THE AURA OF AN AMERICAN-RUN AND CONTROLLED OPERATION.

7. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Q. IS THE USG RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHIP DURING ITS ENTIRE VOYAGE?

A. THE REPATRIATES HAVE ASSUMED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS VOYAGE. THEY SIGNED A PETITION IN WHICH THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR REPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENTIRE TRIP.

Q. WILL THE USG MONITOR THE VOYAGE AND COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SHIP IF IT IS IN TROUBLE?

A. THE SHIP HAS BEEN PROVIDED WITH NAVIGATIONAL AND RADIO EQUIP IN ACCORDNACE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. WE HAVE A NUMBER OF US ACFT AND SHIPS WHICH REGULARLY PATROL IN THE PACIFIC. WE HAVE ALERTED THEM TO THE VOYAGE OF THE THUONG TIN ONE. IF A DISTRESS CALL IS RECIEVED, WE WOULD RESPOND AS WE WOULD TO A CALL FROM ANY SHIP IN TROUBLE.

Q. WHY IS THE US FORCING THESE REFUGEES TO SAIL TO AN UNKNOWN FATE?

A. THE REFUGEES REQUESTED IN A SIGNED PETITION TO BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE SHIP THUONG TIN ONE SO AS TO RETURN TO VIETNAM. WE COULD NOT FORCE THE REFUGEES TO REMAIN. IT WAS CLEARLY THEIR DESIRE TO RETURN TO VIETNAM, SO WE RELEASED THE SHIP TO THEM. THE USG DID NOT ORDER THEM TO CONFIDENTIAL

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SAIL OR ORGANIZE THIU OPERATION. WE ACCEDED TO THE REFUGEES' DEMANDS.

8. FOLLOWING THEIR ARRIVAL ON GUAM (ETA 0235 HRS OCT 14TH) ROBERT KEELEY, IATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ASSISTED BY USIA OFFICER HENRY MILLERR, WILL TAKE CHARGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASPECTS FOR THE PRE-DEPARTURE PERIOD. THE GUIDANCE SET FORTH ABOVE WILL CONTINUE TO APPLY.
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